DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 050 106 TE 002 399

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TITLE The Status of Extracurricular High School Speech in Thirty-Two States.
PUB DATE Dec 70
NOTE 4p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (56th, New Orleans, December 1970)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Cocurricular Activities, *High Schools, *Public Speaking, *Speech Education

ABSTRACT

The results of a survey of the high school extracurricular speech program in the nation are presented. The extracurricular activities include, oratory, debate, and after-dinner speaking. The survey indicated that in the area of forensics the extemporaneous speaking contest was the most popular. (CK)

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THE STATUS OF EXTRACURRICULAR HIGH SCHOOL SPEECH IN THIRTY-TWO STATES

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A survey of the extracurricular speech program in the nation, conducted in the fall of 1970, has shown some interesting if not new developments in that area. Although survey letters were sent to all 50 states, replies were received from only 32.

The questionnaires were sent to high school activities associations, university extension associations, state speech associations, or to individuals who this writer knew to be familiar with the extracurricular speech program in their state.

Replies were received from the following: Alabama, Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin.

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This paper will cover only the highlights of the survey and review those areas of the program which would be of general interest to high school instructors and administrators.

The extracurricular speech program, which includes contests and festivals, is administered and directed in over half the reporting states (17) by a state high school activities association. In eight states the university extension handles the responsibility. The Speech Teachers Association or league directs the extracurricular program in seven. Combinations exist in some of the reporting states; that is, speech association and college speech department; state speech association and high school activities association, etc. Many of the high school activities associations reported they make use of a speech advisory committee for recommendations and directions.

A question relating to what agency or group enforces the state's rules and regulations brought the following response: In 15 states the high school activities

association is the agency. Six states indicated the speech advisory committee serves in that capacity. The university extension committee acts in five, and three indicated no agency is charged with the responsibility.

Participation in the extracurricular speech program ranged from a high of 92% of the high schools to a low of 10%. The average for the 32 reporting states indicates 60% of the high schools in a given state participated in some phase of the extracurricular and/or contest speech program.

The areas of debate and forensics were divided for purposes of the survey. Forensics was defined as individual or group events other than debate, and included such speech activities as one-act plays, oratory, extemporaneous speaking, dramatic interpretation, prose and poetry interpretation, after-dinner speaking, etc.

State debate champions are named in 30 of the reporting states. Two declare no champions and one divides boys and girls for the state championship.

A number of methods are used to divide schools for purposes of the state debate tournament and elimination tourneys leading to "state." Six states divide by size of schools, five by state areas, three by debate experience. Some use power matching in conjunction with one or more of the previous methods. Sixteen reported no division is made. Twenty-four make use of elimination contests prior to the state tournament, and the other reporting states used various methods, including win-loss record at invitational tournaments and "qualifying" invitational tournaments.

Cross-examination debating is gaining popularity on the high school circuit. Twenty-one state use cross-x for their state tournaments; 10 use the standard debate style; 2 make use of both forms in arriving at a state winner.

It was difficult because of answers received on the questionnaire to determine a figure charged per team for the debate tournaments used to arrive at a state champion. Figures presented on a per team basis indicated a low of $2.00 and a high of $45.00. The average fee was $15.00 per team per tournament. Two states

indicate they charge no fee for the state contest but also indicate the judges used at those contests receive no honorarium.

Thirty-one states have invitational tournaments during the course of the school year, and in the majority of states these invitational tournaments are sponsored by the high schools, although 20 indicated that a few of these invitational tourneys are hosted by a college or university.

A majority of the states who have invitational debate contests hold them on weekends, Friday or Saturday, although two indicated they may hold Saturday only tourneys or after school so that no schooltime is used. Only two mentioned they could hold tournaments during the week days other than Friday.

The survey indicated that in the area of forensics the extemporaneous speaking contest was the most popular, followed in order by original oration, dramatic interpretation, poetry reading, oratorical declamation, and one-act plays. Other events mentioned were radio speaking, persuasive speaking, after-dinner speaking, book review, story-telling, and group discussion. A state champion in individual events is declared in 21 of the 32 states reporting.

The high schools host the majority of individual events contests. The entry fee charged for the invitationals ranges from 75¢ per student per entry to $2.00 per student per entry. Only 9 states award trophies to the individual student for placing in these contests. Most states permit medals to be given to the students and sweepstakes trophies to the school.

The question relating to judges' background and experience brought the following response: 21 states use college instructors; only 9 make use of college students; 7 use parents who have a speech background; 11 use high school faculty members; and 16 use the high school speech coach. Obviously, several states make use of more than one source for judges, but the survey indicated that the college students and parents are the last choice in many states.

The honorarium paid to judges varied widely. Eleven states pay nothing to

judges in the statewide contest. Others are paid from $20.00 to $50.00 per day, with the average at $30.00.

The rules and regulations for participating students follow very closely those regulations which apply to high school athletes. The age limitation, limit of time during which a student may participate in the activity, scholastic requirements and travel distance in and out of the state are all closely patterned after the rules for athletes.

Limitations on tournament competition vary. Six states indicated that no schooltime could be lost for speech competition. The majority limited a student to five tournaments or festivals each semester.

Sponsors accompanying students to competitive events are limited to "faculty members only" in 23 states, and an an adult not necessarily a faculty member in six. Three indicated no sponsor is required.

In summary, this writer felt that after carefully examining the returned questionnaires and reading through the various handbooks, manuals and guides which each state uses to administer its speech program, a few criteria stand out:

1. Cross-examination debating is the more popular form to be used on the high school circuit--which is contrary to college competitive debating.

2. The various states follow closely the general athletic requirements as applied to age, scholarship, participation and travel.

3. Most state speech programs are administered by a high school activities association which quite often makes use of a speech committee for recommendations and guidance.

4. The high school-sponsored invitational debate and/or forensic contest is the most popular method of school participation.

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